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REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

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FOR The National Commission on the Future of the Army

Testimony -- 29 May 2015

Good Morning and Hafa Adlai Commissioners I am Roderick Leon Guerrero, The Adjutant General of the Guam National Guard. Thank you for giving the Guam National Guard the opportunity to testify before you.

Before I give you my thought and perspective on the future of the army, it is important for me to convey to you the strategic importance and uniqueness of Guam.

Guam is the westward most sovereign Territory of the United States in the Pacific. Its unique location in the Asia-Pacific region provides both an advantage and disadvantage for the National Military Strategy. It is about 4,000 miles from Hawaii or about seven hour travel time in a commercial airplane.

Distance from Guam to Japan, Korea, the Philippines and Australia ranges from about 1,500-3,000 miles.

Two significant military bases are located on Guam, Andersen Air Force Base and Naval Base Guam. There is also a Naval Hospital in central Guam. Additionally, Department of Defense is in the process of relocating about 5,000 marines to Guam.

Guam is a small island about 34 miles long and 4 miles wide at its widest part. The population is about 175,000. Like New York City, this varies with tourists and people passing through. This is important when we calculate support to Civil Authority.

When North Korea was threatening to fire long range missiles at the island, the Department of Defense moved a U.S. Army THADD unit to defend the island from the missile threat. Today, the THADD unit is still on Guam. Last month the unit completed a change of command and rotated another unit in to assume the mission.

Recently it was announced that the U.S. was going to permanently keep the THADD unit on Guam.

It would be cost effective if the U.S. Army gave the authorization and the mission to fill a THADD unit to the Guam Army National Guard to defend our homeland. The U.S. Army would not have to pay for service members and their families for a permanent change of station in and out of Guam, thus saving thousands of dollars.

If given the force structure and time to train, the Guam Guard would be fully capable of filling a THADD unit. We have Soldiers qualified intellectually and physically. We have the experience to fill high priority units. We were challenged to fill our 721st signal unit when we converted our units 4 years ago. Finding Soldiers to meet the ASVAB test scores was a challenge, but we were able to fill the unit with the best Soldiers who are now tested and certified when we were able to assist USARPAC to meet their signal requirements with our 721st signal unit two months ago at their Lighting Forge Exercise in Oahu and the big island of Hawaii.

An obvious disadvantage is the "tyranny of distance" from CONUS. Compounding this issue is the availability of training areas and centers which has a direct impact on our training readiness. We often mitigate that challenge through integration in JCS and COCOM and ASCC TSCP exercises, for example Guam Guard participates in Balikatan, an exercise in nearby allied partner Republic of the Philippines to help build our State Partnership Program with the Philippines. The army gets a two for one special when Guam Guard conducts annual Training in the Philippines. Guam guard completes its statutory annual training requirements as it continues to refine our State Partnership Program with the Republic of the Philippines.

Additionally, we often coordinate and integrate capabilities we may be short in with our sister Services such as the U.S. Navy in order to maintain our readiness and ability to fully execute some of our Title 10 missions. This lowers some of the risks we do take to maintain our readiness posture.

Because of our unique position in the region, we consider ourselves not only an Operational and Ready Reserve of the Army but the Army itself since Guam and the surrounding islands of Saipan, Rota, Tinian, Yap, Palau, Chuk, are friendly to the United States. We lack a significant presence of Active Component Army units based in the region. An example to demonstrate the significant role the Guam Guard plays in the region, Guam Guard is called upon by casualty brand in Hawaii to send a funeral honor burial team in a moments notice, when a U.S. army Soldier dies from one of these island and is entitled funeral honors because we are fully capable and cost significantly less than sending a team from CONUS.

Any reduction in Guam Guard force structure, no matter how miniscule, has exponential side effects on how we generate forces for Command Authorities, either Title 10 or 32. The core capabilities we provide in support of both Homeland Defense and Homeland Security are critical to these authorities because of, once again, our location.

We appreciate that we are finally getting Army aircraft in our inventory to support those authorities and look forward to fully integrating with our sister Services in providing Search, Rescue and MEDIVAC capability.

In light of the fiscal challenges in the years ahead, we as strategic leaders must maximize on the valuable "human capital" within our ranks.

This valuable resource includes our National Guardsmen and women, our civilian dual status technician force bring very unique and specific capabilities to the fight.

Understandably each is governed by certain regulations and authorities. In order for me to access and leverage their full potential and capacity, some legislation should be introduced to offer flexibility in the use and employment of each of the human capitals.

For example, dual status Technicians are the Guards civilian equivalent full time work force and as such can only be utilized within the prescribed Federal Regulation that governs Title 32 technicians. As TAG, I cannot direct the use of technicians as I would for the regular Soldier or Airman in the formation. This issue should be explored if we are to tap the full potential of our organic human capital resources.

As the Active Component draws down to mandated levels of Force Structure, many exiting Soldiers will be looking for homes in localities of their choice. Unfortunately, Guam is not a desired destination to call home for many who are not originally from here nor have roots to the island.

Because of this, there are very few AC Soldiers making their way to Guam.

Additionally, those who are making it to Guam are not exactly the "Cream of the Crop" and have issues that preclude accession into the Guam Guard. Although there are many being released from AC who are excellent candidates for accession into our formation, but they are few and far between.

Another challenge is the MOSQ and rank issues. The Guam National Guard has a finite force structure with limited MOSs and rank structure. To infuse an AC Soldier into our formation, we require a reduction in rank and an MOS reclassification. This usually results in the Soldier relocating or taking another position elsewhere. I can't recommend any policy change at this time, I can only submit that it is a challenge to process a new recruit Guam and an even bigger challenge to entice AC Soldiers to join our formation if they are not originally from Guam or the region.

Guam is a very diversified community. The current population is more than adequate to sustain our Force Structure Distribution. The Guam Guard can meet and exceed our force structure authorization if the recruiting process on Guam is improved.

Our current challenge is not having a Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS) in Guam. The responsibility of conducting MEPS related duties (Medical Physicals) is the Naval Hospital on Guam. It is not a core mission of the hospital and is therefore not a resource responsibility. As such, we are experiencing an extremely high rate of "Not Physically Qualified" applicants. This has been an alarming concern and has been brought up by all services trying to recruit on Guam in several forums and to several service leadership.

The Guam Guard can meet its End Strength assignment if given the opportunity to explore such innovative programs as the Hometown Physical Program that was introduced by the National Guard several years ago. This program, when implemented in Guam several years ago showed a marked increase in applicant accession. One can surmise that the Naval Hospital accession physical is unreasonably stringent and demands closer scrutiny by an independent and disinterested third party entity.

The National Guard's mandate of accepting risk because of population size in order to generate Army forces is a constant challenge. This risk is often mitigated by increased funding across all budgeted Programs. Thus, We always appreciate any assistance in further increased funding.

Guam currently will have all 10 core capabilities with the activation of the Aviation Unit. There is no doubt in my mind that if given the opportunity to explore options outside that of Naval Hospital, the Guam National Guard will reach its full capacity of force structure. Positions such as medical doctors and specialized skills will always be difficult to fill and for those, we have to look externally for resolution.

My concern for the future of the Army is that we do not take advantage of the opportunity to have one operational reserve for the Army. The National Guard makes economical sense because of our dual mission capability. The Army Reserve is a Title 10 capability that is Only accessible to title 10 missions with limited capacity and no flexibility to be accessed by local authorities to respond to natural or man-made incident.

The National Guard Force is a Title 32 force and capability that is accessible to Governors of states and territories and has the ability to surge to Title 10 Capacity to answer the call for any federal mission. Clearly the choice is self evident but never realized. The National Guard should serve as the primary Operational Reserve force.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this very important issue.

////////ORIGINAL SIGNED////////
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The Adjutant General